

CIRM Disagrees with President Bush's Misleading Position on Stem Cell Research

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The California Institute of Regenerative Medicine (CIRM) issued the following statement in response to President Bush's State of the Union address:

Tonight, in his State of the Union address, President Bush distorted the scientific facts on stem cell research and did a disservice to the millions of patients suffering from chronic disease and injury for whom stem cell research holds great promise for future therapies and cures.

The stem cell research community is united in the position that human embryonic stem cells clearly remain the gold standard for research into pluripotent cells that have the capacity to form all tissues of the body. Human embryonic stem cells are also the model against which all other potentially pluripotent cells need to be compared. The President's proposals to further limit medical research in this area fail to take into account the intricate realities of the state of stem cell research. Indeed, the recent advances in which skin cells were induced to become pluripotent would not have been possible without research involving human embryonic stem cells. Furthermore, induced pluripotency is a technology still in its infancy. Though this technology offers great hope and promise, it will not, for the foreseeable future, be suitable for clinical studies in humans because of safety concerns.

Therefore it is critical that all avenues of stem cell research be aggressively advanced. To do otherwise would increase the already devastating restrictions that have burdened Federal support of stem cell research and patients who are depending upon it. This Administration's position on stem cell research has already cost years in lost research productivity. Further restrictions would result in more lost time in developing stem cell based therapies and cures that hold great promise to alleviate suffering for the most destructive and costly diseases such as spinal injury, loss of sight, heart muscle injury, Parkinson's Disease, ALS and diabetes.

CIRM supports and applauds any programs the White House advances that accelerate NIH funding for research on induced pluripotency. There is much work to be done on all cell types, including this highly promising but early stage technology. CIRM looks forward to engaging with NIH and other state and federal organizations in accelerating the progress of stem cell therapies to the clinic.

CIRM also strongly opposes reproductive cloning.

About CIRM CIRM was established in 2004 with the passage of Proposition 71, the California Stem Cell Research and Cures Act. The statewide ballot measure, which provided \$3 billion in funding for stem cell research at California universities and research institutions, was overwhelmingly approved by voters, and called for the establishment of an entity to make grants and provide loans for stem cell research, research facilities, and other vital research opportunities. To date, the CIRM governing board has approved 156 research grants totaling almost \$260 million, making CIRM the largest source of funding for human embryonic stem cell research in the world. For more information, please visit www.cirm.ca.gov.

Contact: Ellen Rose

415-396-9117

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